Bay Area cities reluctantly approve housing in face of state laws

By J.K. Dineen, San Francisco Chronicle, August 5, 2020

“From San Bruno to Castro Valley to Lafayette, a slew of major Bay Area housing approvals are the result of changing politics and new state legislation that forces cities to accept development despite residents’ protests. This includes Senate Bill 35, which streamlined housing construction in counties and cities that fail to build enough housing to meet state housing goals. Also, Senate Bill 330 cuts the time it takes to obtain building permits, limits fees, and prevents local governments from shrinking projects that abide by all city codes.

“In June, the San Bruno City Council approved the 425-unit Mills Park development. Just a year ago, the council had rejected it, prompting the threat of a lawsuit from California’s Department of Housing and Community Development.

“In July, the Lafayette Planning Commission approved a proposal for 315 apartments on 22 acres that’s been caught up in conflict since 2011, a fight that has included lawsuits and a ballot measure. Last week, the San Mateo Planning Commission unanimously approved the 961-unit Concar Passage mixed-use development, which had been in the works for three years.

“Still, the flurry of major housing approvals comes as rents in the Bay Area are plummeting and financing is nearly impossible to obtain for development.

“While market-rate developments may be on pause until the economy bounces back, affordable projects will continue to be built, according to Sam Moss, executive director of nonprofit developer Mission Housing. Moss called SB 35 and SB 330 ‘the most prolific housing legislation that has ever been passed in California. Without it, thousands of affordable units would not have been approved.’ ”

Read the full article here.

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